Three Stars and a Sun

[bahay kubo kahit munti]

Dagami

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The Evil Empire from the West [exogenous factor]

The menace of expansionist policies of the West changed the lives of our ancestors forever. The consequences of these changes still determine our lives today: poverty, ignorance, subjugation, political marginalisation, loss of identity and self determination, resource degradation.

Magellan kept his words to King Charles, passed the great American continent and indeed opened a new route to island of spice. Trinidad reached Limasawa then Cebu.

Lapu-Lapu's uncompromising attitude against the Spaniards proved to be right and Raja Homabon's hostile behavior towards them later might indicate his realization about the diabolic intentions of the conquerors.

The Spanish government sent more expeditions between 1525 and 1542. The one of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi was the break through. Upon receiving orders from the Audencia of Mexico, four ships carrying 350 men sailed off to the archipelago and successfully captured Cebu and later Manila and its surrounding provinces (de la Costa, 1965).

From then on, the regalian doctrine took effect in the archipelago based on the capacity of the centralised government that received orders from Spain. This meant that all natural resources of the archipelago became royal property, and all of its inhabit ants royal subjects with obligations to obey royal orders.

Bathala, Diwata, Anyito and Ninuno Subdued [internal weakness]

The Spaniards imposed a new social order wherein political, economic and cultural affairs were centralised under their control. An abstract large-scale community, an organised centralised structure, was introduced — but not without blood. Pockets of resistance — like those of Tamblot (Bohol), Bancao (Leyte), Sumoroy (Samar), Tapar (Iloilo), Witch (Mangungutud o Mangkukulam) in Gapang (Nueva Ecija)- emerged. Pedro Gumapos (Vigan), Diego and Gabriela Silang (Vigan) Mandaya, Basi Revolt (Ilocos), Dabao (Caraga, Mindanao) and many more scored substantial successes but were quickly subdued.

Oppressive policies and practices such as encomienda, taxation, polo system and discrimination caused revolts. Christianity, however, was successful. Successive missionaries captured our ancestors' deep spirituality, thus winning their loyalty — which explained numerous cases of betrayal that caused revolts to fail.

If our ancestors had discovered that they could use traditional archipelagic networks of support, they could have won the war.

It is difficult to know when the people in the archipelago began to consider themselves as a nation rather than simply as Tagalogs, Ilokanos, Visayans, or members of any specific tribe. However, it is reasonable to suppose that the oppressive conditions established common sentiments against the colonizers (de la Costa, 1965).

Disease from the West [decentralized system abandoned]

The oppressive conditions that could not be transcended by the pockets of resistance continued until the Enlightenment age in Europe. Reason and science prevailed and became influential at

the global scale. Rebels and intellectuals like Bonifacio, Rizal, del Pilar, Mabini, Luna and others did use this influence from European ideas to drive the Spanish away.

The Katipunan claimed sovereignty. Sovereignty would mean the abolition of oppressive conditions that were approved by huge numbers of poor and under-privileged. This would be done by staging revolution and creating a republic with a centralised government that will rule the entire archipelago. The community beyond face-to-face politics thus established and further reinforced by Americans.

The few privileged had their own way of creating nationhood. According to Josephine Dionisio's introduction to Randy David's book Nation, Self and Citizenship: An Invitation to Sociology, the Filipino nation is in part an invention of European-educated Filipino intellectuals who we know now as our heroes.

Katipunan and its idea of sovereignty became the viable expression of freedom to many locals who were already influenced by the centralistic system brought by the Spanish monarchy and its political organisations.

The primitive autonomous and interdependent barangays were not sufficient to resist the organizational patterns of the colo nizers that were said to be superior to the primitive structures. This is only true if we measure superiority by conquest. The co lonial patterns are designed to colonize while the primitive structures are characterized by cooperation, diversity and the ab sence of private property.

The context discussed above reinforced the idea of statism among the rebels. The conceived territory which is the archipelago was to be governed by a uniform centralised political power that later expounded by statist Pan-Germanic form of nationalism.

The term Tagalog used by Bonifacio refers to the entire archipelago (Reyes, 1995) represents our early concept of nation. The concept of "Inang Bayan" or "Haring Bayan" is the earliest large-scale imagined community that represents the idea of nation hood among the Katipuneros and its supporters. Imagined because the face-to-face process of barangays has been replaced by highly centralised political organisation based on the idea of republicanism and representative democracy-generally de rived from the principles of "Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen" of the Revolutionary Assembly in France on August 27, 1789.

Filipino Identity, a Product of Coercive Processes

As history shows, the conclusion of the Philippines as a nation is due to long coercive processes of colonisation that continue until today. Physically, colonizers are gone, but their supremacy deeply and profoundly penetrates our values and prejudices, our culture and developmental perspective.

Anderson considered nationalism a pathology in our modern developmental history. The Philippines as a nation is indeed a pathology that undermined our autonomous traditions, interdependent and horizontal political relationships based on mutual-cooperation.

Nationalism and statism are illnesses that destroyed the desirable conditions of the primitive communities in the archipelago. Primitive barangays did engage in warfare among themselves. For instance, inhabitants of Mindanao and Panay exchanged at tacks on a regular basis. Tribal war commonly known as head hunting was also typical among tribes in northern Luzon. Largely,

common causes of attacks and raids were revenge, betrayal of a pact and unresolved dispute of territorial claims — but not to dominate and to rule.

Highly decentralised they were, but in permanent warfare they were not. Interdependent relationships provided overall mutual protection and benefits and were common among primitive communities.

The term "Filipino" originally refers to an individual born in the archipelago by Spanish parents. Currently, many of us regard Filipino as our superior identity that is upheld by many groups, tribes, ethnolinguistic identity and geographical affiliation in the archipelago. This goes for basically everyone except tribes that remain isolated and people in the southern Philippines who aim to secede and to establish a Muslim nation.

Our sense of nationalism and identity as Filipino was particularly high during the times when revolutionary fervor was strong within us — especially during the Katipunan uprising, People Power I, II and III. However, the meaning of our identity as Filipino continuously changes. After the two major political exercises in EDSA, social and economic conditions have not changed. Un employment is steadily increasing, hunger is prevalent, political marginalisation is alarming, and ecological destruction is ram pant throughout the archipelago and has caused the loss of livelihood of millions. After billions of pesos have already been spent on an agrarian reform that started during the Aquino regime, this reform is still far from completion.

Prices of basic commodities are increasing fast while workers' wages barely move. The peso is gaining strength in relation to the dollar to the detriment of the OFWs who deliver substantial value in government revenues. Corruption is deemed "accept able" in our culture.

We are maids in Europe and Singapore. prostitutes in Japan, and underpaid workers in the international seafaring industry (David, 2002), while the characteristics of our lives at home are obedience, passivity, individualism, opportunism, corruption, dependency due to the exogenous forces brought by colonisation, centralization of power, capitalism and relationships based on competition and hierarchy. These conditions further facilitate the process of decadence of the meaning of "Filipino" that es tablished through coercive processes.

Upon acquiring ideas from the West, native rebels felt com pelled to adopt and invent "Filipino" as a national identity to effectively fight Spanish colonizers. The statist framework that governs the Katipunan reinforced this and we totally veered away from the decentralised fashion of the primitive organisations.

Ultimately, the creation of our identity as a nation and as a Filipino did not come from our own cultural, political and social conditions and self-determination. It came from op pression, slavery, aggression, arrogance and the dominance of the West. The pioneer dwellers of the archipelago up to the baranganic phase were neither Christians, republicans nor parliamentarians nor corporate leaders nor bureaucrats. They were hunters, gatherers, fishers, farmers with their own industries. They had their own decentralised system of politics, autonomous and interdependent. They had rich diverse culture and a generally prosperous economy that sustained massive trading activities with China, Malaysia, and Indonesia and even Siam (Thailand).

Jose Rizal wrote in his essay "The Indolence of the Filipino People":

> All histories of those first years, in short, abound in long accounts about the industry and agriculture of the natives: mines, gold-washings, looms, farms, barter, naval construction, raising of poultry and stock, weaving of silk and cotton, distilleries, manufactures of arms, pearl fisheries, the civet industry, the horn and hide industry,

> etc., are things encountered at every step, and, considering the time and condition of the islands, prove that there was life, there was activity, there was movement.

He further explained that:

> And not only, Morga, not only Chirino, Colin, Argensola, Gaspar de San Agustin and others agree in this matter, but modern travelers after 250 years, examining the decadence, and misery assert the same thing. Dr. Hans Meyer, when he saw the unsubdued tribes cultivating beautiful fields and working energetically, asked if they would not become indolent when they in turn should accept Christianity and a paternal government.

Evidently, the state – through its government and with the help of Christianity — oppressed, enslaved and corrupted us — while at the same time creating and reinforcing the Filipino identity and nation.

The Philippine nation and the Filipino citizen have never delivered concrete expressions of democracy and prosperity for the lives of the many. In fact, these notions undermined the freedom and abundance of the primitive communities.

I do not propose splitting up into several unrelated and hostile groups or anything like that. The earlier discussion informed us already that this is not part of the autonomous and interdependent wisdom that I wish to explore. The theme of mutual cooperation and the absence of social stratification characterized the primitive communities, particularly Pisan tribal groups, between 50,000 to 500 BC. We can gain insights from this in order to imagine our future political communities. Communities that will allow total diversity and that will concretely address social problems such as poverty, ignorance, massive ecological destruction, as well as all forms of abuse, discrimination and political marginalisation.

Reestablishing this decentralised system under a non statist framework is a sound proposition particularly be cause the statist alternatives are increasingly loosing their appeal to the citizens of the archipelago. Redefining "Filipino" based on a non-statist paradigm is the key to over come the mentioned social problems. Reviving our lost identity means regaining our lost freedom and abundance from the centralistic systems of the state and capitalism.

In our modern age, decentralised, autonomous and inter dependent could mean the following: direct workers' control of industries and factories; direct management of employees of the former government institutions for administrative functions; the collectivization of agricultural lands; direct community management of ecosystems; total respect and recognition of the indigenous claims to ancestral lands and waters; direct participation of the community, producers, workers, women, youth, gays, lesbians, senior citizens and sidewalk vendors to economic and social planning; the socialization of facilities such as housing, health services, water and energy supply — substantial time for socialization is an essential human activity that must be reinstituted in the actual application of direct democracy.

Making politics accessible to every family is what counts. What we need is the widest participation of the people from the communities and localities. The system of representative democracy is not designed to accommodate people's participation in power and we must replace this with direct democracy, a political system that offers a genuine participation to power by being organised in decentralised fashion based on the principles of solidarity and mutual cooperation.

The proposed system requires a dialectical process of educating citizens in every municipality and barangay with regard to the idea of self-determination, deep and radical ecological awareness, cooperation, solidarity, mutuality, diversity and productivity. In a broad stroke, these processes will bring people to voluntarily organise based on their interests at the municipal, city or barangay level. Voluntary structures will actively participate in decision-making at public places facilitated by administrative councils. It should be noted that members of administrative councils function only to facilitate the implementation of the agreed system. They do not have any authority or privilege.

The survival of humanity is strictly connected to the health of global ecology. Its condition is deteriorating fast. This is due to anthropocentrism and hierarchical relationship of human being.

The higher the position in a hierarchical structure the greater the access to power and benefits. This promotes competition and relationships between people that revolve around incentives and privilege. Incentives entice people to produce more for the markets and shops which will result in massive extraction of natural resources and the exploitation of the earth as a sink. This causes ecological crises. Accumulation of incentive of the few "winners" leads to poverty and marginalisation of the many.

Before the global ecology turns into total waste, people of the world must find ways to inno vate relationships and systems that will replace political hierarchy and centralization of incentives and benefits of streams. We must do it swiftly.

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